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SPECIAL COMMITTEE AGAINST APARTHEID

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Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 9 August 1990, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. GAMBARI (Nigeria)

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Special meeting in observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Struggle of Women in South Africa

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The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

SPECIAL MEETING IN OBSERVANCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE STRUGGLE OF WOMEN IN SOUTH AFRICA

The CHAIRMAN: In 1981 the General Assembly proclaimed 9 August the day commemorating the historic and heroic demonstration of women against the racist pass laws in South Africa in 1956. Since then, this day is observed annually. On behalf of the Special Committee, I would like to thank you all for joining us in the observance of this solemn occasion.

I would also like to welcome and express special thanks to the representative of the Secretary-General who, owing to developments in the Security Council, is unfortunately unable to be here today to represent the Secretary-General. However, the Secretary-General's statement will be read out by our own Assistant-Secretary-General, Mr. Mousouris, head of the Centre against Apartheid.

We welcome also Senator The Honourable Lucille Mair, Minister of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Jamaica - who is well known to some of you here in United Nations circles - as well as Ms. Thutukile Eileen Bhengu and Ms. Elizabeth Rejoice Sibeko from South Africa, who have kindly accepted our invitation to be here in person to address this meeting.

I would now like to make a statement on this solemn occasion on behalf of the Special Committee.

We are here to salute those women in South Africa who, 34 years ago today, defied the oppressive and inhuman machinery of apartheid and publicly demonstrated their objection to, and abhorrence of, the pass laws. It is a fitting tribute to the justness of their cause that in 1981 the General Assembly resolved that the world should observe 9 August as the International Day of Solidarity with the Struggle of Women in South Africa and Namibia. In June 1986, special legislation regulating the pass laws was abolished.

(The Chairman)

I take this occasion to salute the courage and bravery of the women in Nambia who have risked all and have taken their rightful place in the struggle to ensure that their fathers, brothers and children may live in dignity in the land of their birth. It is also to their credit that the struggle has reached a historic landmark, as independence came to their land, Namibia, on 21 March 1990.

The commemoration of this day is intended, not as a mere ceremonial exercise but as a test of our determination to see in South Africa peace, dignity, freedom and justice without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion.

The black women of South Africa and their children bear the brunt of the most extreme and harshest policies of apartheid, so it is not surprising that women have become prominent participants in the liberation struggle against the racist policies of South Africa.

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(The Chairman)

These women suffer under the triple yoke of national oppression, sexual discrimination and exploitation as workers, and they bear the full brunt of apartheid on all fronts, political, economic and social. In spite of their suffering, however, the black women of South Africa have demonstrated a capacity for defiance and great power of endurance. Together with their menfolk, they have continued the struggle with ever-increasing determination and consistency, actively participating in protests, boycotts and trade-union activities. Since their men have to work far away from home for extended periods of time, they often single-handedly have to take care of and protect their families, earn a living and contribute towards keeping the liberation struggle alive.

In the past 12 months we have witnessed increased international attention being directed towards the political situation in South Africa. The march of the black people of South Africa to freedom is headed for ultimate victory in the very near future. This could not have been done without the tremendous sacrifices the people of South Africa, particularly women and children, have made, nor without the support of the international community. Indeed, the combined forces of internal resistance and international pressure gained momentum last year, marking a major victory last December at the special session of the General Assembly on apartheid and its destructive consequences in southern Africa.

The Declaration spelled out a number of measures to be taken by Pretoria in order to create a favourable climate conducive to negotiations and referred to the process and objectives of such negotiations towards the early eradication of apartheid and the advent of a united non-racial and democratic South Africa.

The South African authorities have recently shown some signs of realism, as evidenced by certain positive measures. These encouraging steps should be followed by the immediate implementation of the remaining measures required for the

(The Chairman)

establishment of a climate conducive to negotiations, as stated clearly in the United Nations consensus Declaration.

As members are also aware, in the Declaration the Secretary-General was requested to prepare a report on the progress made on the implementation of the Declaration and submit it to the General Assembly by 1 July 1990. On 20 July this year, the Secretary-General introduced his report to the General Assembly, which decided to consider it between 12 and 14 September of this year.

It is therefore on the basis of the United Nations Declaration and the Secretary-General's report that the Special Committee believes that the measures taken so far by the De Klerk Government, significant as they may be, meet only part of the conditions set out in the Declaration. Of the measures required by the Declaration in order to create a climate for negotiations, only the lifting of the ban on political parties and movements has been fully implemented. The other four required measures have not been implemented or have been implemented only partially.

Even so, normal political activity continues to be hindered by the provisions of repressive legislation, in particular the Internal Security Act, which was recently used forcefully to arrest a number of African National Congress (ANC) members, including Mr. Maharaj, a senior member of the National Executive of the African National Congress. This shows once more that an atmosphere of free political activity does not yet exist in South Africa. It further raises doubts about the real intentions and tactics of the authorities at Pretoria.

In this context, existing security legislation and resistance to change on the part of the entrenched structures of the system, specifically at the local level, serve, in the words of the Secretary-General: "as the Damoclean sword over free political activity". Yet some encouraging news came from Pretoria two days ago, following the meeting between the South African authorities and the ANC. There is

(The Chairman)

a promise that some provisions of the Internal Security Act will be reviewed and that, in the words of the Pretoria minutes:

> "The Government will continue reviewing security legislation and its implications and applications in order to ensure free political activity, and with a view to introducing amended legislation at the next session of Parliament."

There is also the clear prospect that political prisoners will be released in the next few months and that exiles will be able to return after 1 October 1990.

The Special Committee, concerned with the violence in Natal and the terrorist activities of the extreme right, expects that these matters will be effectively addressed. Even taking account of the latest developments, we cannot but conclude, as the Secretary-General has done in his report, that the process of change is still at an early stage. Therefore it becomes evident that pressure on the Pretoria authorities should be fully maintained and that no relaxation of any measure should be contemplated at this stage.

It is the view of the Special Committee that the present situation in South Africa holds promise for the dismantlement of apartheid through negotiations and for the creation of a non-racial democracy in that country. We therefore urge the international community to continue to assist the process towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict in South Africa by maintaining the required pressure, as agreed in the consensus Declaration.

In conclusion, and on behalf of the Special Committee against Apartheid, I wish to salute once again the struggle of the oppressed people of South Africa and to commend them for their remarkable dignity in the face of injustice at the hands of the apartheid régime. The perseverance and wisdom which they have shown are remarkable, especially at the present stage, when the dawn of a new era appears to

(The Chairman)

be on the horizon. South Africa will soon be rid of the obnoxious system of apartheid. The Special Committee gives you its word on that.

I now have the honour to invite the Assistant Secretary-General and Head of the Centre against Apartheid to read his message on behalf of the Secretary-General.

Mr. MOUSOURIS (Assistant Secretary-General and Head of the Centre against Apartheid): I am reading the message of the Secretary-General:

"In observing this international day of solidarity with the women of South Africa, it is important to recall that the vast majority of women in that country have been for decades an integral part of the resistance movement against the apartheid system. In this vital role they have borne the brunt of the injustice that is inherent in such a system. They have been victimized by the institutional structures set up to strengthen and perpetuate apartheid. They have seen their homes demolished and their people forcibly removed to areas in which they had little or no connection.

"These forced removals have in turn entailed lives of isolation, because men in the family were given no other choice to earn a living than to join the migrant labour force. Conditions there prohibited the presence of their wives and children. The impact on family life was brutal. Husbands were separated from wives, fathers from their children. It became incumbent upon women to overcome immense odds to raise and educate their children and ensure the integrity of their homes.

"Throughout their long travail, South African women did not give up hope. They were sustained by the vision of a new South Africa which held promise of a peaceful future for themselves and their children.

(Mr. Mousouris)

"The mission which I sent to South Africa in June this year was able to meet with a number of representatives of this vibrant section of South African society. It was impressed with their determination to play a part in the creation of a new South Africa.

(Mr. Mousouris)

"The active involvement of women in the process of change and the need for them to be beneficiaries of political transformation cannot be overemphasized. In the new phase that South Africa is entering, where the prospects for a negotiated settlement of the conflict are within reach, the women of South Africa have legitimate expectations that their role in the new society will be fully recovered and their equal status guaranteed.

"A new South Africa will benefit immensely from the talents, the wisdom and the love of peace that characterize the women of that country."

The CHAIRMAN: I now have the honour to invite His Excellency Mr. Christopher Katsigazi, representative of the Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), to make a statement on behalf of the Chairman of the OAU.

Mr. KATSIGAZI (Organization of African Unity (OAU)): The discrimination to which the women of South Africa are subjected is twofold. While women elsewhere in the world struggle to promote universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms without distinction as to sex, women in South Africa are further weighed down by a heavier burden: the abhorrent system of apartheid, which totally negates the purposes and principles of enunciations of basic human rights such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenants on Human Rights and the Charter of the United Nations.

On this occasion, my delegation wishes to emphasize the plight of the South African woman and the sacrifices she must make, as well as her laudable contribution to the struggle against apartheid. As active combatants, women in South Africa have suffered as victims of murder, detention and torture. As mothers, they are the first to carry the beacon of the struggle to the next generation. Their role as inexhaustible and undaunted pillars of support for the struggle is, unfortunately, often taken for granted. It is therefore with deep respect that my delegation pays tribute to the women of South Africa.

(Mr. Katsigazi)

A system so dehumanized that it cannot even be sensitized to the immense suffering of vulnerable groups such as women and children can in no way be reformed. It must be dismantled.

We welcome current developments in South Africa as signs on the horizon which indicate the possibility of the creation of a climate in which negotiations on the country's future can take place. However, as I speak, the deplorable system of apartheid, its repressive tendencies and its destructive consequences remain facts of life in South Africa. Everywhere except in Natal, the state of emergency has been lifted, a number of political prisoners have been released, and the bans and restrictions on organizations and persons opposed to apartheid have been technically lifted. However, security legislation, such as the Internal Security Act, the Suppression of Communism Act, the Defence Act and the Intimidation Act remain in force. It is therefore a matter for deep regret that certain Governments have lifted some sanctions against the Pretoria régime. The heat of pressure against the system of apartheid must be kept up.

My delegation firmly believes that the people's struggle will triumph. The fight against apartheid will certainly pay, and the world will soon see a united, democratic and non-racial South Africa.

The CHAIRMAN: I now have the pleasure to invite our next special guest, Ms. Thutukile Eileen Bhengu, National Human Rights Co-ordinator of YWAC and a member of the ANC Women's League, to make a statement.

Ms. BHENGU: I greet all those present in the name of the struggling women of South Africa, both the unsung heroines and those who are internationally renowned. I speak here on behalf of those women who are at present languishing in South African prisons, those who have been forced by apartheid laws to endure the rigours of life in South Africa's bantustans, those who are in the ranks of the

(Ms. Bhengu)

workers' movement in South Africa's urban areas and those who are called upon to make sacrifices in the bitter struggle for the elimination of apartheid in their motherland.

Allow me to express our deeply felt gratitude to the Special Committee against Apartheid for convening this solemn meeting and for the kind invitation extended to me to address this gathering. Let me also take this opportunity to place on record the appreciation of the oppressed people of South Africa for the steadfast support the Special Committee has given to our people over the years as they fought to rid themselves of the scourge of apartheid. During the very dark moments in our struggle, we have constantly drawn strength and inspiration from the fact that people of conscience the world over are with us. We are happy to note that the Special Committee has played a pioneering role in the struggle to isolate apartheid. For this we thank the Committee most sincerely.

The ninth of August is a very important date in the political calendar of our struggle. It is the day on which we celebrate the struggles of women. It was on this day in 1956 that the Federation of South African Women organized a march of 20,000 women to the citadel of apartheid at Pretoria to protest against the carrying of passes. That march was a statement made by women that they would fight for their right to live and move freely in the country of their birth.

This commemoration of 9 August occurs in the wake of cataclysmic political changes that have touched literally every part of the world. Our region, southern Africa, has been no exception. It is a matter of great pride that this year we meet when the people of Namibia have triumphed over apartheid and colonialism and have joined the ranks of the international community of sovereign States. We seize this opportunity to salute the women of Namibia for their resounding victory, which serves as a great contribution to our own struggle.

(Ms. Bhengu)

With regard to South Africa, 1990 has been aptly dubbed the year of changes. It has ushered in a new era in our struggle for national liberation. The unbanning of the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC) and other political organizations and the release of our leaders from prison, including ANC Deputy President Nelson Mandela, have had a momentous impact on political developments in South Africa.

(Ms. Bhengu)

Moreover, this 9 August commemoration coincides with the formal relaunching of the ANC Women's League in Natal. It should be recalled that the ANC Women's League has played a pivotal role in the mobilization of women in South Africa. Indeed it was this same Women's League that served as the major component of the Federation of South African Women, which in turn is associated with the famous Pretoria march.

Today it is envisaged that the ANC Women's League will facilitate the participation of women at all levels of the liberation struggle, the adoption of a charter of women's rights as a constitutional instrument in post-apartheid South Africa and the formulation of policies that will encompass the full emancipation of women.

Today's commemoration takes place in the wake of a historic agreement between the ANC and the South African régime, that agreement, which is now known as the Pretoria Minute, is bound to have a far-reaching impact in the search for the peaceful resolution of the South African conflict as envisaged by the United Nations Declaration adopted by consensus at the sixteenth special session of the General Assembly.

The major significance of this Pretoria agreement lies in the fact that it represents an important stride in the clearing of the obstacles that stand in the way of meaningful negotiations towards a non-racial, democratic South Africa. In this context it is our considered view that that agreement will make a tremendous contribution towards ending the agony of not only the millions of South African people but also the peoples of the neighbouring sovereign States that have been brutalized by Pretoria's destabilization policies.

If we seem to be overly optimistic in our evaluation of the current political trends in South Africa, it is only because we remain firmly committed to a determined search for peace and democracy in our country and the region. And yet

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it would be a serious error for anyone to conclude that what currently obtains in South Africa is in any real sense irreversible. Similarly it would be totally misleading to regard the prevailing political situation as reflecting the end of apartheid. On the contrary, all evidence points to the fact that apartheid is firmly in place in our country. Even as the world euphorically applauded De Klerk for his so-called bold initiatives, irrefutable evidence indicates not only that the régime has failed to meet the demands in the United Nations Declaration but also that there has been a sharp escalation of repression, manifested in the gross violation of human rights in South Africa.

As an activist in the field of human rights, I have been exposed to the painful experience of monitoring numerous cases of politically related violent acts against thousands of people throughout the country. While the South African régime has publicly committed itself to the release of political prisoners and detainees, and has actually released a few, there is ample evidence that since 2 February thousands of people throughout the country have been and continue to be detained under the Internal Security Act. Torture and death in detention occur at an alarming rate. The unbanning of political organizations was highly welcomed both inside and outside South Africa since it was assumed it would herald an era of free political expression. That assumption, however, soon proved to be a mirage. In fact, the period following the unbanning of political organizations was marked by intensified harassment of the masses through increased activities of the army, the police, the right-wing, the vigilantes and other agents of repression.

There is growing concern that the régime has lost control of its police and army, which are increasingly acting with impunity. Under the guise of the maintenance of law and order, political activists are being targeted for special

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harassment on an unprecedented scale, rendering the whole question of the unbanning of political organizations a mere farce. In response to the demand that the South African troops be pulled out of the townships, the régime claims to have abided. But our experience points to the contrary. The escalation in the casualties of so-called political violence is quite frightening. It is report that in the first six months of this year there were 1,591 reported political deaths in South Africa. While it is true that the bulk of these deaths occurred in Natal, this fact unfortunately tends to shift the focus away from the violence that has gripped the entire country. In this violence the culpability of the army and police is incontestable.

The practice of violent forced population removals is still a fact of life in South Africa, with devastating consequences for millions of the South African black population. In this callous practice, the army and the police seem to surpass themselves in abject brutality.

Permit me to touch, albeit briefly, on the tragedy that engulfs Natal. Coming from that region, may I say how painful it is for us to hear the situation in Natal being glibly characterized as black-on-black violence, or even Zulus killing Zulus. While there can be no denying the regrettable loss of life in Natal, such a characterization serves only to cloud the issues and absolve the régime of its responsibility for the thousands of lives lost in that area. It is important, in our view, for the world to know the facts.

What is happening in Natal can best be characterized as apartheid at war against the people. The origin of that war dates back to the 1980s, with the emergence of the democratic organizations, especially the formation of the United Democratic Front, which attracted a lot of support countrywide, including

(Ms. Bhengu)

Natal. The reaction from Buthelezi and his Inkatha was swift and brutal, since he regarded Natal as his own political preserve. The phenomenal growth of the UDF was perceived as a threat to Buthelezi's so-called leadership of 7 million Zulus. The régime, which also felt threatened by the rise of the UDF, ganged up with the Inkatha in unleashing a reign of terror on those who were perceived as UDF activists or sympathizers.

(Ms. Bhengu)

Even those who professed neutrality were defined as the enemy. Affidavits collected over the years clearly point to the collusion and collaboration of the police and Inkatha members in vile acts of terrorism against the people.

The volatile situation in Natal was further exacerbated by the deployment of the notorious Battalion 32, whose horrendous activities, including the rape of women and the looting of homes, had already been much in evidence in Namibia. It should therefore be obvious that the régime will have to take full responsibility to end the carnage in Natal and that to pretend that the crisis can be contained by means that exclude the recognition of that fact is not only counterproductive but also extremely dangerous.

It is our humble submission that, while it may be true that encouraging political developments have taken place in South Africa, none of that should be construed as being profound and irreversible. We believe that if the international community wishes to encourage the processes occurring in our country, it would be instructive to recall that it is the combination of the struggles waged by our people in South Africa and the pressures imposed by peoples the world over that are responsible for bringing the régime to the position where it is today.

Therefore it would require precisely such a combination to move that process further. For us, the conclusion is inescapable. The consensus decision of the international community embodied in the United Nations Declaration adopted at the sixteenth special session of the General Assembly remains valid. We ask the peoples of the world to assist in reaching a speedy realization of our objective of ending apartheid by maintaining and even intensifying sanctions against the régime.

As we mark South African Women's Day, we cannot but express our firm solidarity with all peoples fighting for justice and independence. In that regard, we salute the people of Palestine under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), especially the heroines of their struggle. We greet the women

(Ms. Bhengu)

of Western Sahara engaged in the struggle for self-determination, as well as those women struggling in Central America and elsewhere. We pay tribute to our sisters, the women of our region of southern Africa, with whom we share a common plight and common aspirations.

For our part, we pledge that we shall not rest until the monster of apartheid is annihilated and South Africa is a truly non-racial and democratic society.

The CHAIRMAN: I now invite Ms. Elizabeth R. Sibeko, representative of the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC), to make a statement.

Ms. SIBEKO: On behalf of the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC), the custodian of the genuine aspirations of the dispossessed, oppressed, exploited but struggling people of Azania, we greet this assembly on the occasion of the observance of the international day of solidarity with the struggling women of Azania. Special gratitude goes to the Special Committee against Apartheid, which has invited the PAC to participate once more in this observance.

The ninth of August historically marks the struggle of the oppressed women of occupied Azania. The history of women's struggle in our country dates back to pre-colonial times, when African women were known to have urged their men to go to battle by their battle-cry. No man could hide or stay behind once the battle-cry had been sounded. Today, when we talk about heroines, we remember great women like Mantantisi, Modjadji and indeed Mkabayi ka Jama, the paternal aunt of King Shaka. Mkabayi occupied the position of deputy commander-in-chief of Shaka's armies, if I may borrow the modern usage of the term. She advised King Shaka on the deployment and fighting of the regiments. She was indeed the inspirer behind Shaka's military exploits. Thus we come a long way in our struggle as women.

(Ms. Sibeko, PAC)

In 1950, hundreds of women organized a beer-hall strike in Durban against the authorities. As they approached the beer-hall, they were met by baton-wielding policemen who physically attacked the women and arrested a number of them. The violent response by the régime in that instance did not deter the women from organizing subsequent united action against myriad unjust laws in our country.

1956 was yet to witness another massive force of women, 20,000 strong, marching to the government buildings in Pretoria in protest against the carrying of passes. The struggle at that point in time had reached another level. The women were challenging the basis of apartheid colonialism: the passbook. Never before in modern times had a document been invented that so controlled people's lives as the passbook did in Azania. This was a political struggle whose implications and repercussions the women were fully aware of. The women had made a mark in the history of their struggle once more.

As the oppression mounted and more and more repressive laws were enacted, women became the worst victims. There were forced removals, uprootings, endorsements out of the urban areas, and all this affected women tremendously. The racist régime soon referred to them as "superfluous appendages", which meant that their presence in the townships was undesirable.

As the women were being forcibly endorsed out of those areas, they were also being forcibly separated from their husbands. In the meantime, they were being dumped in areas where they had never been before. The explanation behind that inhuman act was that they were required by the Group Areas Act to live in the so-called homelands.

Great suffering ensued. The women had to face harsh weather conditions without any provision for such an eventuality. Those are the places where women were compelled to stay 11 months in a year without their husbands. Those are the

(Ms. Sibeko, PAC)

dumping-places where women were turned into virtual widows while their husbands were still alive. Those are the dumping-places where the highest infant mortality claimed the lives of little children before they reached the age of two. Those are the dumping-places which the régime urged the world at large to recognize as "independent homelands". Those are the dumping-grounds that are crumbling today in the face of a so-called peaceful negotiated settlement. Indeed, those are the dumping-grounds that are 90 per cent inhabited by women and children.

(Ms. Sibeko, PAC)

In 1976 an unprecedented student uprising, popularly known as the Soweto Uprising, took place inside occupied Azania. The uprising was sparked by, amongst other things, the forced use of the Afrikaans language as a medium of instruction in African schools. The racist regime sent its police to quell the uprising by shooting the students. Many students lost their lives in the shooting, and many more were maimed for life. There was world-wide condemnation of the racist régime for shooting and killing student protesters.

Many mothers lost their sons and daughters and other family members. Women - in particular, mothers - stood in solidarity with their children, who were arrested, tortured, harassed and intimidated by the police. As a result, many mothers themselves faced detention, harassment and even gunshot wounds. This situation will never be wiped out of the minds of our people. Anybody who kills in cold blood any mother's child kills the spirit and soul of that mother.

As a result of the uprising, the inferior Bantu education system was constantly disrupted; it still is. We are told now that things are changing for the better in my country. We are informed that State subsidies have been introduced as a measure to try to reduce racial inequalities between black and white. Education is one such area.

Statistics provided by the Institute of Race Relations reveal that despite these pronouncements by the régime, student enrolment in technical colleges, tecnicons and universities point to the contrary. For instance, in the technical colleges in the two-year period between 1987 and 1989 African students enrolled in 1987 totalled 7,652, as against 41,670 white students. In 1989 the total of African students enrolled was 9,638, as against 45,694 white students. In the tecnicons, in 1987 the African students enrolled numbered 4,792, as against 40,731 white students. In 1989 there were 9,654 African students enrolled as against 47,662 white students. In the universities, in 1987 the African students enrolled

(Ms. Sibeko, PAC)

were 61,378, as against 151,028 white students. In 1989 the African students enrolled were 91,462, as against 156,737 white students.

We are also told that the predominantly white universities receive the lion's share of private-sector scholarships or bursaries for African students, but, according to statistics, only 7 per cent of such students are enrolled at those universities.

In the section dealing with unemployment, statistics show that the number of unemployed is as high as 5 million. Women form the majority of that number. Because they face three mountains - national oppression, economic exploitation and gender discrimination - they are the first to be fired and the last to be hired.

We refer to the aforementioned statistics in order to gain the attention of those who think that the situation in our country is an easy one, those who think that the South African racist regime, which for decades has been recalcitrant, arrogant and defiant, can, by some stroke of magic, turn the situation into one of democracy, equality and peace. It will take more than pious words from De Klerk to bring about a solution that is acceptable to the oppressed and dispossessed majority in our country.

The PAC and the Azanian people are concerned about the current situation in our country. Talks about negotiations are high on the agenda of the South African régime. Our response to negotiations is as follows.

First, as of now, negotiations with the racist régime are out. The régime not only has avoided making fundamental or irreversible changes in the five pillars of apartheid which represent the ideological basis of the colonial system, as called for by the PAC, but has also failed to meet the pre-conditions laid down by the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations consensus Declaration.

(Ms. Sibeko, PAC)

Secondly, the régime has cunningly used the pre-conditions as negotiating issues.

Thirdly, the régime has claimed for itself, as a reward for those actions, the lifting of sanctions, the liquidation of armed struggle and the ending of the régime's political isolation.

The PAC firmly believes that the fundamental changes in our country must not be measured against cosmetic changes or pious declarations of intent but, rather, should be pegged to the eradication of the five pillars of apartheid. Moreover, the PAC has called upon De Klerk to implement the most democratic and genuine solution to the problems of our country: the constituent assembly. We advocated such a solution at the time of the PAC's inception in 1959, and we reiterate it once more. It is our firm belief that a constituent assembly elected on the basis of a non-racial common voters' roll by all citizens in Azania over the age of 18 would give legitimacy to anyone wishing to participate in drafting a constitution for a democratic Azania.

The United Nations and the South African régime have gone through such an exercise in the recent case of Namibia's independence. We implore the United Nations to give full support to this principle. We are determined that our people shall go through such an exercise by direct participation.

Earlier in our statement we pointed out the discrepancies in the education and training of our people vis-à-vis the white population in our country. For a people to be able to participate fully, not only in the political process but in the actual running of the country, there must be trained personnel in various fields and skills. This is an important prerequisite in our case. The African people in Azania, lamentably, lack these requirements. This has been deliberately brought about by the régime in order that we should be unable to run a technologically advanced economy such as Azania's.

(Ms. Sibeko, PAC)

We learn from statistics that moves are afoot to proclaim the availability of land for development to provide housing for the thousands of Africans outside the bantustans. Statistics provided by the Urban Foundation further reveal that in order to provide housing for the destitute African population, 127,000 units a year must be provided over the next 20 years. This averages out to a need for 15 houses built every hour for 24 hours, 365 days a year.

We further learn that the land proclaimed as available for development has been allocated R20 million in order to enable financial institutions to grant R12,500-R35,000 for low-income housing. We learn that contributions have been received from the Swiss, German and United Kingdom Governments in the amount of R8 million, in addition to R12 million from several local and foreign companies. The land-development areas mentioned in the proclamation are situated where Africans live. We are also told that the United States Government refused to contribute to the scheme on the ground that it reinforced the Group Areas Act. We hope that many other Governments, companies or foundations wishing to contribute to such schemes sponsored by the régime will be bold and honest enough to refuse to participate in schemes that will further entrench the apartheid system under the guise of helping the African people.

The PAC is deeply concerned about the violence in Natal, which recently spilled over to the Transvaal - I refer to the Sebokeng incident. In seeking a way to resolve this internecine fighting, our President, Comrade Zephania Motopeng, has made a plea to both Mr. Mandela and Mr. Gatsha Buthelezi to devote more effort to ending the conflict. Our President also called 10 days ago for a three-day prayer period concerning the conflict. We hope and pray that the conflict will soon be resolved.

(Ms. Sibeko, PAC)

The PAC also laments the fact that we have lost some of our best people this year through so-called accidents and through plain murder. Here we refer to Comrade Jafte Masemola, a stalwart of the PAC who spent 27 years on Robben Island and was killed in a hit-and-run car accident in late April this year; Comrade Sam Chand, who was brutally murdered with his wife and three children, along with a citizen of the Republic of Botswana who was employed as a guard at the Chand residence; Comrade Ishmael Chand, Sam Chand's brother, who was also killed in a car accident en route to his brother's funeral in Botswana; Comrade Sam Mabe, a reputed Sowetan journalist and an Africanist, who was gunned down in cold blood by two assassins in Soweto, and Comrade Muntu Myeza, Publicity Secretary of Azapo, who also died from a so-called car accident.

We have no doubt in our mind that these deaths were all planned by the enemy to strike fear and intimidation in our midst. It is public knowledge that the South African racist régime has a killer machine, as has recently been exposed in a video tape recorded during the so-called confessions of the hit-men of the death squads. No one in his right mind could place the blame anywhere else but squarely on the South African racist régime. We are not impressed that there are these so-called confessions and revelations concerning the death squads. To us it means one thing and one thing only: that these are cover-ups to enable the death machinery to operate undisturbed.

In conclusion, the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania is taking positive steps towards uniting the African people in Azania. Last month the PAC held a congress of the oppressed in Johannesburg attended by about 1,500 delegates, in which different groups and organizations assembled to discuss the current situation and the question of unity. On 30 June the African Women's Organization held a congress in the Transkei to discuss the question of unity among women groups in Azania. We are pleased to report that we are also organizing in homes country-wide and have

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established numerous branches throughout the regions of the four provinces. Since the formation of the Pan African Student Organization we have witnessed a tremendous following among students in both secondary and high schools. In order to reach as many people as possible, especially in the countryside, transport facilities are needed. We lack these. Thus our young women and students have to travel far and wide to disseminate information concerning the Constituent Assembly and other relevant issues in our struggle. We are therefore appealing for financial assistance to overcome these obstacles.

From the women's side we appeal for financial assistance to run projects that address themselves to the needs of women and children in their homes. I can mention one such project which needs funding, namely an agricultural project that will also be run as a co-operative to benefit the women. There are several others on which I can furnish information to interested parties.

Lastly, we pledge our solidarity with women all over the world who are struggling for self-determination and national emancipation.

The CHAIRMAN: The next speaker is Senator the Honourable Lucille Mair, Minister of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Jamaica. The Senator will address the meeting as a special guest representing the support group of eminent women established by the seminar on the special needs of South African refugee women and children in August 1989.

Ms. MAIR: May I express my very sincere thanks to the members of the Special Committee against Apartheid for giving me the privilege of participating in this Day of International Solidarity with the women of South Africa in their struggle for freedom from apartheid oppression.

Too often history forgets the women, but we do not. And so today we remember those fearless women who on 9 August, 36 years ago, dared to defy the notorious

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pass laws of the South African régime. They have as a result inscribed their names for ever on their country's roll of honour.

This year as we celebrate their heroism and renew our commitment to their struggle I believe we are in somewhat brighter spirits than we were a year ago, for this week the world is monitoring closely the "talks about talks", which are taking place in Pretoria between President De Klerk and that remarkable statesman and leader of the African people Nelson Mandela, freed at last.

Those critical talks are preparatory to the long anticipated constitutional negotiations which could alter the whole course of history in all southern Africa. We await the outcome of those negotiations with some anxiety, with understandable caution, but also with great hope.

I believe that it is Namibia today which justifies that hope, for Namibia is no longer a captive colony, illegally held by South Africa. It is now an independent, sovereign State. How has this come about? Through the determined exercise of the international will in support of those in southern Africa who are demanding equality, justice and the full enjoyment of their human rights and who are also prepared to die fighting for those rights. Namibia's eventual achievement of independence after those many years of oppression and resistance strengthens our faith at this time in the power of such international solidarity mobilized through the United Nations.

The Special Committee against Apartheid, working closely with the United Nations Centre against Apartheid, has been unquestionably a dynamic and effective agent of such mobilization, and I think we all appreciate the value of the work it has done. It has been exemplary in honouring its mandate. It has kept the issue of apartheid always high on the United Nations agenda. It has insistently - and I think at times even aggressively - challenged the conscience of those who merely paid lip service to the principles of the Charter.

(Ms. Mair)

It was the Committee's concern for the vast human suffering bred by the apartheid system which led to the establishment of a support group of women - of which I am honoured to be a member - in response to the recommendation of the seminar organized by the Special Committee, held in January 1989 in Harare, on the special needs of South African and Namibian refugee women and children.

Our group has been fortunate in having the wise and sensitive leadership of Mrs. Lisbet Palme, who like her husband, the late Prime Minister Olof Palme of Sweden, has been a dedicated champion of racial equality. Our group had the responsibility to observe at first hand the condition of Namibian and South African women refugees in Namibia and in the front-line States, all in varying degrees victims of South Africa's total strategy for destabilizing and dominating not just one country but a whole region.

We also had the responsibility to communicate our findings to the international community and to solicit assistance for the vital needs of women refugees and returnees of southern Africa. We should be mindful that for thousands of such women and their children the refugee camp is the only home for who knows how long, and we have to help them keep hope alive.

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For thousands of returnees to Namibia - and before too long, we hope, returnees to South Africa - fundamental tasks lie ahead. They have to reunite fractured families, rebuild their lives and their communities, and out of the wreckage which apartheid creates, they have to construct free, productive, humane societies, and, in too many instances they have to undertake this virtually from scratch.

That eminent statesman of Africa, the former President of Tanzania, Mr. Julius Nyerere, in his very recently published report of the South Commission, which he chairs, has aptly described apartheid as the antithesis of development. And so it is not surprising that the grossest indices of underdevelopment are found in those countries which are tainted by the plague of South African apartheid.

And in such situations as we have already heard about today women are doubly, if not triply, colonized. They suffer the disabilities of both racism and sexism, and with their children they constitute the group "most susceptible to exploitation" and deprivation of human rights.

Our fact-finding mission found tragic evidence of this, and I quote just one telling extract from our report, which Mrs. Palme presented last December to the special session of the General Assembly on apartheid and its destructive consequences in southern Africa:

> "women and children in exile or displaced everywhere in the region are particularly at risk. The fabric of family and society is torn. Women and children, especially girls, are abused. Not only have thousands of children died, or their development been seriously impaired, but also children caught in the political conflict and the regional warfare have been subjected to psychological trauma."

That fine body of the United Nations, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), has documented in truly heartbreaking statistical detail the

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debilitating and dehumanizing consequences of apartheid on children on the front line. For example:

> "... twenty-five children are dying every hour from the effects of war in southern Africa ..."

And there are many more of these grim figures, all of them making the fundamental point that South Africa's strategy for destabilizing and dominating the region is directed not only at economic, military and security targets but also at the social fabric of nations. So this involves the destruction of health and education facilities, the dislocation of communities, the loss of food production, the constriction of development and social budgets, and so forth.

Our mission to the region was, of course, all too short, but it was long enough to make it evident that the devastating impact of such policies on the human condition, on family and community structures, cannot be easily or quickly healed. So neither the Declaration, which brings an independent Namibia into being, nor the eventual declaration - and it will eventually come - of a united, non-racial democratic South Africa can release the international community from continuing vigilance, activism and substantial support.

Such vigilance must apply at this present crucial and fragile stage of the Pretoria talks now taking place, because although they clearly indicate some forward movement, and this we applaud, we must, nevertheless, remain constantly on the alert against the very real and serious dangers which exist. And the words of caution in the Declaration adopted at the special session of the General Assembly on apartheid last December continue to be our guideline:

> "To ensure that the international community does not relax existing measures aimed at encouraging the South African régime to eradicate apartheid until there is clear evidence of profound and irreversible changes ..." (General Assembly resolution S-16/1, annex C.9. (d)

(Ms. Mair)

We have yet to see changes of a profound and irreversible kind, and so the alert remains and sanctions remain. Nor can we stress too much that continuing international vigilance, activism and support apply as well as absolute imperatives to ensure not only political and constitutional transformation but radical advancement of the human condition, without which nationhood in the countries of a new southern Africa will be meaningless.

One surely inspiring aspect of our group's experience was the evidence of the enormous assets which the women of the region can bring to the complex and demanding processes of nation-building.

And I believe that to appreciate the full value of those assets, especially on a day like this when we celebrate South Africa's heroines, we need to reflect on what it must mean to be a human being, to be a woman, and to have every vital aspect of one's universe circumscribed by an arrogant ideology which cannot conceive of black being beautiful.

I think that the world has a great deal to learn from the women who inhabit that universe, who are subjected to its daily humiliations, injustices and cruelties and who nevertheless have persistently asserted their humanity and their womanhood. Their response to the challenges of the liberation struggles has often served to sharpen and to enhance qualities which can be invaluable national assets as the prospects become more hopeful for countries of southern Africa to embark on more authentic courses of development.

In the area of the economy, for instance, one sees the resourcefulness of women who have been the key actors for centuries in their traditional economy: they have seen these roles eroded by apartheid policies which are calculated to destroy the economic base of the black majority. So, together with the massive removals, the forced separation of families, the gross levels of unemployment which

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prevail, growing numbers of female heads of households have to assume full responsibilities for their families. And their response? Today, we see increasingly the emergence of small co-operatives - small but significant - and self-help projects, designed to produce much-needed shelter, food and child-care facilities in the townships as well as in the rural communities, all of which, incidentally, have great potential for attracting meaningful assistance from international agencies.

Such resourceful activities of women offer opportunities of economic viability to those women who are working together, and they are particularly viable if indeed relevant training and necessary inputs can be provided; they are also delivering desperately needed human services and goods. We note with great appreciation that many of these activities have been initiated and are supported by the women's arm of the liberation movements, such as the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC).

In those organizations women have acquired skills of leadership, popular organization and activism, with an impressive history of effective action, for example, in the consumer resistance movement and in their defiance of forced-removal laws, accommodation laws and the like. We are familiar with so many of those historic protests of the women of the region. In these campaigns they have demonstrated courage of an extraordinary degree, in the face of physical violence, arrest, detention and exile. And the shining spirit of a Winnie Mandela personifies such heroism.

If there exist residues of sexism or of patriarchalism which might place constraints on the participation of southern Africa's women in the creation of their new societies, the history of their leadership, their sacrifice, their

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dynamism and their incredible heroism during the past harsh decades speaks loudly for them. All of those talents will be needed in the daunting tasks ahead, the tasks of national reconciliation, in which they have, I believe, a special healing role to play, as well as in the fundamental long-term task of national reconstruction.

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My final words are a plea to those who would assist the women of southern Africa: to listen carefully to what they themselves are saying about themselves and about their countries. I recall the strong, clear statement made by Namibian women in 1988 as they organized themselves for an ecumenical decade of activism. It was a pledge which I believe could be echoed 100 times over by all the women who face the criminal evil of apartheid:

> "In the era of war, discrimination, racism, sexism and exploitation of women, our women's voices will not keep quiet. We will address the questions affecting women, and as a nation, no matter how critical it may be ... Our work is to enable women to realize their role in the struggle for national liberation.... We will not sit still. We shall support our prayer with serious action."

The international community too must support that prayer with serious action.

The CHAIRMAN: I next invite the representative of the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations, Mrs. Maha Khoury, to make a statement.

Mrs. KHOURY (Palestine): On behalf of my delegation and on behalf of the Palestinian people at large and Palestinian women in particular, we salute our sisters of South Africa and extend our hands in solidarity with their struggle against apartheid. South African women and Palestinian women have much in common: not only that they face the same type of oppression - namely racism, be it from the Pretoria régime or from the racist Israeli occupier - but also that they share the same aspirations to freedom and independence and the same strength and the same determination to achieve their goals.

South African women played a crucially important role in the struggle to free their people. The political gains that have been achieved so far can be attributed largely to the South African women who stood firm against apartheid by organizing

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themselves in the various unions and other organizations. The road to peace, freedom and independence is still long and hard. It is important for the world community to keep the pressure on by continuing sanctions against the apartheid régime in order to help the people of South Africa achieve their aims.

As for Palestine, the world community has a responsibility as well: in order for the Palestinian people to achieve their independence and freedom, and in order to end the illegal occupation, it must exert pressure on the Israeli occupier to end the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza immediately and unconditionally.

Again, we extend our solidarity to our sisters and brothers in South Africa. As we always say, their victory is our victory.

The CHAIRMAN: The Special Committee has received messages from Heads of State or Government of the following countries: Central African Republic, Ghana and Guinea. Moreover, the Special Committee has received messages from Governments or Ministers or Secretaries for Foreign Affairs of the following countries: Bolivia, Chile, Cuba, Israel, Jamaica, Malaysia, Pakistan, Panama, Peru and the Philippines. The Special Committee has also received messages from the following intergovernmental and international and national non-governmental organizations: the Soviet Women's Committee, the World Federation of Trade Unions and the Women's International Democratic Federation. I suggest that all those messages should be issued as a document of the Special Committee against Apartheid, taking into account the usual financial implications. If there is no objection, I shall take it that the Committee agrees with that suggestion.

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: As we come to the end of our meeting, I should like to express my profound appreciation, and that of the Special Committee, to our special guests and other speakers for their contributions to the successful outcome of this meeting. The women and children of South Africa are the most vulnerable to the evils of apartheid and bear a particularly heavy burden in the struggle to eliminate apartheid. Our meeting today has once again served as a strong message to them that the international community cares and that the world is on their side, a message that we are all determined to contribute to lending the fullest support to their legitimate struggle for freedom.

I now invite all present to join me in observing a minute of silence in the memory of all the men, women and children who are the innocent victims of apartheid and who have sacrificed their lives in the fight to create a South Africa free of apartheid.

The participants, standing, observed a minute of silence.

The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.